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Personnel

SURVIVOR ASSISTANCE

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This instruction implements AFR 36-8, *Employee Benefits and Entitlements*. It prescribes the procedures to follow when a civilian employee dies. It explains the responsibilities of commanders, supervisors, civilian personnel flights (CPF), installation mortuary officers, and other staff officials for notifying and assisting the next of kin. This instruction applies to appropriated fund civilian employees, including United States Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard Title 5 employees.

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

This is the initial publication of AFI 36-809, revising AFR 40-717.

1. Philosophy. The survivor assistance program aims to reduce the trauma on the deceased's next of kin. Each person handling the personal affairs of the deceased employee must act with compassion and on a confidential basis.

2. Responsibilities:

2.1. Commander:

2.1.1. When an employee dies, the commander conveys condolences in person or sends an official letter of condolence to the next of kin within a week of the death. This letter should be personal, sympathetic in tone, and offer full assistance to the employee's survivors.

2.1.2. If the employee dies while on duty, notifies the next of kin when employee assigned at his or her installation dies while on the job or while traveling on official business.

- Notification is carried out with the assistance of the CPF, the employee's supervisor, and other commanders, as needed.

- Prompt notification is essential so that the family will not learn about the loss from outside sources.
- When possible, notification is made in person, especially when the death occurs overseas under hostile circumstances. If this notification has to be made by letter, the letter should give any details about the death deemed appropriate. Release of details should be handled with compassion and dignity so as not to distress the next of kin.

2.2. Supervisor. When an employee dies, the supervisor (or next immediately available supervisor):

- Promptly notifies the servicing CPF, the organizational commander, and the installation mortuary officer.
- Gives to the CPF the name, relationship, address, and telephone number of the emergency addressee designated on AF Form 971, **Supervisor's Employee Brief**.
- Prepares Standard Form 52, **Request for Personnel Action**, as directed in AFI 36-107, *Personnel and Position Actions* (formerly AFR 40-296), and hand-carries it to the CPF.
- Certifies and hand-carries if possible, or sends AF Form 1278, **Time and Attendance Form**, to the civilian payroll office as soon as possible on the first workday after the employee's death.
- Secures the employee's personal property for prompt inventory and shipment to the authorized recipient as directed in AFI 34-502, *Disposition of Personal Property* (formerly AFR 143-6).
- Arranges for someone to turn in government property charged to the employee.
- Prepares compensation forms as directed in AFI 36-811, *Injury Compensation*, if a work-related injury or illness caused the employee's death.
- Notifies an official of any union or employee group that the employee belonged to so it may provide any insurance or other benefit due to survivors.
- On request, gives to the Military Personnel Flight information from the deceased's official personnel records (see AFI 36-6002, *Casualty Services*).

2.3. Civilian Personnel Flight (CPF):

2.3.1. If the death occurs in a theater of operations or as a result of terrorist activity, notify the servicing CPF and the CPFs located nearest the next of kin. In these situations, CPFs use the casualty reporting process outlined in AFI 36-3002 to notify the next of kin as quickly and compassionately as possible before the media reports the casualty.

2.3.2. If the employee dies as a result of a work-related injury or illness, the CPF promptly notifies AFPOA/DPM, Washington DC, and the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, either by telephone or by message and describes the details of the death.

2.3.3. On request, the CPF gives information to the Military Personnel Flight from the deceased's official personnel records (see AFI 36-3002).

2.3.4. The CPF notifies the local public information officer of the death.

2.3.5. If requested, the CPF makes biographical information from the personnel folder available for use in a public announcement. No public announcement is made before the next of kin has been told of the death.

2.3.6. If the death occurs in an overseas area, the CPF notifies the American Embassy in the host nation.

2.3.7. The CPF assists the next of kin as soon as possible after the death occurs, by:

- Contacting the next of kin, and offering the assistance of the servicing CPF (or that of a more conveniently located Air Force CPF).
- Mailing copies of letters and supporting information to other CPFs mentioned in letters of assistance, to hasten any help they are expected to provide.

2.3.8. The CPF counsels the survivors on their entitlements, which may include:

- Any unpaid compensation.
- Death benefits under the Civil Service Retirement System, the Federal Employees' Retirement System, the Thrift Savings Plan, and Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program.
- Health benefits coverage.
- Possible eligibility under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, if a work-related injury or illness caused the death.
- Availability of special tax benefits if the death occurred because of terrorist or military action (contact the nearest office of the Internal Revenue Service for more information).

2.3.9. The CPF gives proper claim forms to survivors and helps them complete and process their claims quickly. Specifically, the CPF:

- Promptly notifies survivors that they may need up to six certified copies of the death certificate (continental United States [CONUS] death) or DD Form 1300, **Report of Casualty**, if the employee died while in a temporary duty status or in a location outside the CONUS.
- Advises survivors to find out whether any benefits are due them under the Social Security Program, the Veterans Administration, a credit union, or the decedent's membership in an employee union, social or religious organization. For more information, see AFP 40-15, *Retirement Planning and Survivor Counseling*.

2.3.10. The CPF should periodically remind employees:

- That it is important to make beneficiary designations in writing and to keep the designations current.
- To consider taking part in government insurance programs.
- To make a will.
- To take similar protective measures.

3. The Installation Mortuary Officer. Helps the next of kin on mortuary affairs benefits.

4. Preparing and Transporting Remains:

4.1. When an employee dies while traveling on official government business, or while permanently serving outside the 50 states and District of Columbia, the remains are prepared and transported as

provided for in AFI 34-501, *Mortuary Affairs Procedures and Benefits* (formerly AFR 143-1), and the Joint Travel Regulation (JTR), volume 2, chapter 6, part B.

5. Travel and Transportation of Family Members and Personal Property:

5.1. When an employee stationed outside the CONUS dies, travel and transportation of family members, household goods, and personal effects are provided as specified in AFI 34-502 and in the JTR, volume 2, chapter 6, part B. Family members need approved travel orders before they undertake such travel and transportation.

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